

Memorial Talk
By Karen Chamberlain

One of my favorite memories of Dad is a trip to the Berkeley Municipal Dump to deposit garden clippings on a Saturday afternoon when I was in grade school. My little brother Darol, age 7, and sister Lynne, age 5 and I sat in the back seat of the old Dodge sedan. A warm breeze blew in through the open windows, and overhead, seagulls screeched. The day was magic because Dad, sweaty from his work in the yard, sat just in front of us, breathing in the air, and savoring our trip.... to the dump.

As much as I cherished my time with Dad, I knew from an early age that his real world was physics. Parenting was not his primary focus. He often came to visit us from that world, but he mostly lived *there*, even when he was standing right beside us.

In fact, science colored his approach to everything. He stored his beloved clarinet, on which he played Glen Miller tunes, on top of the mantle in our living room. He would say, "If there's an earthquake, we will know if it is over 1.5 on the Richter scale, because my clarinet will fall off the mantle."

Sometimes he could bring physics and his life with us together. When my brother and I were teenagers, he taught us to sail. One summer, when he was doing top secret work at Woods Hole Laboratory in Massachusetts, he found a place near the laboratory where my brother and I could dock our little boat overnight. Every morning he would help us rig the boat, and send us out for a day on the water. In the evening, my brother and I would tie up the little sunfish(?), take down the sail, and carry it to Dad, who met us on the front steps of the laboratory. But we couldn't just drive away. We had to wait half an hour while the men from Security spread out the damp sail across the front steps, yard after yard of it, to scan it for "bugs". Only after the sail got *its* security clearance could my father take it inside and store it.

Sometimes Dad was hard to get to know. He would reach out to me by describing how magnetic resonance works, when I was hoping to find out how he was feeling. So having a close relationship with him could be a challenge.

Although Dad didn't talk much about himself, he was good at teaching how to drive safely, build a campfire and how to fish. And over the years he provided quite an example by living as he did.

Nothing could divert him from his profound humility. He often recounted a story about his early graduate work with Professor Enrico Fermi in Chicago. Fermi gave him a problem to solve. Dad struggled with it diligently for 2 weeks and then returned to Fermi, having made little progress. Fermi said, "Why Owen, the answer to this problem was in the elementary physics lecture this morning!" Dad *loved* to tell this story.

He was *so* humble that you could spend years with him and never hear about many of his accomplishments. My brother, sisters and I first learned about some of his contributions to the world after his death, by reading newspaper articles.

Many of my father's gifts to the world reflected his sense of justice. He spoke his conscience, not because he was a crusader, but merely because it was the right thing to do.

In my early twenties, at a time when most of my friends were struggling with parents who *opposed* their idealism, *my* father advocated *more* freedom for Berkeley students. He spoke out for calm, rational and fair solutions to the problems causing crisis on campus.

That same calm approach to crisis was sometimes needed at home, too. I was quite young when one particular crisis arose. Early in his academic career, with three children, Dad did not have money to remodel our kitchen, which was antiquated. One day he returned home from work to find my mother, who was fed up with the cramped space, ripping out the wall between the kitchen and the breakfast nook with a saw and hammer. My father immediately climbed into the attic to find out whether the wall she was tearing out was *load-bearing*. It was not, so he serenely got out his home movie camera and began to film her progress.

I believe his tranquility was partly due to his ever-present sense of humor. His humor and positive attitude helped him deal with major challenges. Toward the end of his life, Dad's courage in the face of Parkinson's Disease was awe-inspiring. Whenever I would call to find out how he was doing, he would sweetly answer, "Pretty well," because *that's how he saw it*.

Over the course of his lifetime, my father married 3 times: first, to our mother, Babette Copper, or Baba, in 1943. His second marriage, to June Steingardt, ended with her death in 1991. During the last 8 years of his life, he was married to Senta Pugh. His relationship with Senta reflected the growing he had done over the years. Their unshakeable devotion to one another changed my understanding of what a relationship can be.

How I have looked at my father has changed over time. I have loved him blindly, as little children do, I have angrily protested his distance from me, as teenagers sometimes do, and I have grown to cherish him deeply.

He has probably brought more to my life than I even realize at this moment. He has given me the understanding that honesty is precious, an unwavering belief that others' views are as valid as my own, and the courage to try to find myself, even if I end up out of step with others. He has given me a *yearning for peace among all cultures and nations*.

Our world has lost a special human being. My brother and sisters and I have lost my father. But I am at peace in knowing that Dad lived fully and with joy.....I hope to follow that example.